

Research priorities for smell disorders revealed

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Credit: Petr Kratochvil/public domain

From stem cell therapy to regenerating smell receptors, experts at the University of East Anglia have helped develop a list of research priorities for people with smell and taste disorders.

They worked with Fifth Sense, the charity for people affected by smell and [taste](#) disorders, to identify ten research priorities that will benefit people with conditions such as [smell loss](#) and parosmia—where things don't smell or taste as they should.

The wish list covers everything from finding effective treatments for post-COVID smell loss, to investigating how genetics play a role in smell and taste disorders and researching new treatments such as [stem cell therapy](#) or technology such as implants.

The [top ten research questions](#) was revealed on May 6 at a smell loss conference being held at UEA.

The day-long event will also include practical demonstrations, patient stories, management strategies and presentations about all the latest research in this field.

Prof Carl Philpott, from UEA's Norwich Medical School, said: "Before the pandemic hit, it was estimated that about five percent of the population suffered with a smell or taste disorder.

"We know that the pandemic has left many more people with long-term smell loss, or smell distortions such as parosmia. And this huge rise in smell and taste disorders has created an unprecedented worldwide demand for treatment.

"We worked with ear, nose and throat specialists, neurologists, GPs psychologists, patients and caregivers to find out what questions they wanted answered by future research.

"The main question that came up time and time again from patients and clinicians alike was about treatment. People want to know how they can regain their sense of smell, and they want research to focus on finding

new treatments.

"There are a lot of unknowns around treatments like stem cell therapy, or using new technology such as nasal implants, which could work in the same way as a cochlear implant for hearing. More research needs to be done in these areas."

Other research priorities on the list cover how [medical professionals](#) can be better educated in treating smell and taste disorders, and how testing for smell and taste disorders could be improved.

Researching the mental health consequences of smell and taste disorders is also a top priority, as well as finding out what coping strategies help in dealing with smell and taste disorders.

Duncan Boak, Chief Executive and founder of Fifth Sense, said: Fifth Sense has worked to engage and involve people affected by smell and taste disorders in research ever since Prof Philpott and I established the charity in 2012.

"It was my experience of losing my [sense of smell](#) following head injury that prompted me to start Fifth Sense, and in turn Fifth Sense enables others to use their lived experience to help us transform the way smell and taste disorders are understood, treated and researched.

"I'm delighted that we have completed the priority setting partnership and established this set of research priorities using that same approach.

"We are looking forward to working with our growing team of leading clinicians, researchers, commercial organizations and Fifth Sense members to propel research that will transform the lives of people affected by [smell](#) and taste disorders. This is the beginning of an exciting new chapter for us all."

Provided by University of East Anglia

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